

Interview Transcription

Interview Date: 08/01/2017

Interviewee: Sister Mechtilde Gerber

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 08/18/2017

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:00:32.11] INTERVIEWER: Sister, would you tell us your full name?

[00:00:35.26] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Sister Mechtilde Gerber. And my regular name by us is Mechtilde [Therese] Victoria [Emmanuelle], and then I have other names too. My grandmother's and grandfather's names: Saint Joseph and Our Lady of Grace.

[00:01:07.06] INTERVIEWER: Very nice. Was--is one of those your baptismal name?

[00:01:11.29] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: My baptismal name is Aline Therese Victoria. Because I was born on November 11th, when the [First World] War ended--exactly at the moment the war ended I was born--on November 11, 1918.

[00:01:32.28] INTERVIEWER: What a grace! Wow.

[00:01:36.15] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: So the doctor said, "She has to be named 'Victoria'". But my father said, "She already has a name." But he gave me the name anyway--Aline Therese Victoria Gerber.

[00:01:50.25] INTERVIEWER: That's marvelous. So how old are you now Sister Mechtilde?

[00:01:53.21] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I'm ninety-eight. I'm going to be ninety-nine in about a month--exactly [unintelligible] on the 11th of November.

[00:02:07.10] INTERVIEWER: And where were you born?

[00:02:08.20] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Mexico City [Mexico].

[00:02:11.04] INTERVIEWER: And did you grow up in Mexico City?

[00:02:14.14] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Not all my life, no. Just when I was a baby--little baby. My parents travelled a lot, so I went with them to--. And my father loved Switzerland because he was Swiss, and--he was really born in New York but Swiss descent. And so he loved Switzerland, and we were educated--we went to school in Switzerland.

[00:02:45.13] INTERVIEWER: And then did you go to school in Arizona also?

[00:02:48.05] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes, because when we went--when the war started we came to the United States. We landed in Tucson [Arizona]. And we stayed at the Hotel Pioneer in Tucson. And there was a lady--Jewish lady there that told my mother that the best school--she was looking for a school for us--she said the best school is the St. Joseph Academy. So she took her there and she loved it and that's where she convinced my father who was partisan to put us there. And so that's how it happened that we became Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

[00:03:36.12] INTERVIEWER: And you also--you're talking about your other [birth] sisters as well.

[00:03:40.10] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes.

[00:03:40.18] INTERVIEWER: What were their names?

[00:03:44.04] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Aline Marie religious but her name was Ilda [Sister Aline Marie Gerber, baptismal name Ilda Florence Gerber]. Aline Marie was her name in religion. And Hildegarde was the name of my youngest sister whose name was Anna Maria [Sister Mary Hildegarde Gerber, baptismal name Anna Maria Gerber].

[00:03:58.13] INTERVIEWER: And are you the middle?

[00:04:02.10] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I'm the middle and I'm the one that entered first.

[00:04:05.15] INTERVIEWER: Oh. So tell us--you met the Sisters of St. Joseph then at the high school? When did you decide to enter?

[00:04:14.02] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, when I realized how nice these Sisters were. I didn't--I liked the way they were. I had gone to religious school before and they were all stuck up and funny. But the Sisters of St. Joseph were so simple and pleasant and happy. And so I decided that's why I wanted to enter. And my sisters followed me. They felt that same way.

[00:04:45.20] INTERVIEWER: And I understand your father was not happy about it.

[00:04:49.16] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: No, not at all. It was very hard on him, and he was very noble but he. At the very end he asked the priest that was there with him to baptize him like his daughters. And so he died a Catholic. And he went to heaven right away because he was just--he was baptized and then he died.

[00:05:22.14] INTERVIEWER: So where did you go to novitiate?

[00:05:25.14] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: At St. Joseph Academy here in Los Angeles.

[00:05:29.28] INTERVIEWER: Where was--do you remember where that was?

[00:05:33.00] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: It's on Slauson and--

[00:05:36.03] INTERVIEWER: Ah. St. Mary's Academy.

[00:05:39.18] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. Mary--that's where I was. Novitiate was at St. Mary's Academy.

[00:05:43.20] INTERVIEWER: And how old were you when you entered, do you remember?

[00:05:48.03] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Oh yes, I was probably twenty-one, because I had to wait until I was of age so that my parents wouldn't let--make me get out of the convent. And they tried but it--they didn't do very well. They didn't do very well at all.

[00:06:17.16] INTERVIEWER: I suppose not because all three of you became Sisters.

[00:06:22.09] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Because the people that they asked--they said no that we were okay--we won't--[unintelligible] telling them that we were sickly and we didn't do well and couldn't last very long and that probably we'd die very soon. But that was all just to let them know that he--they didn't want us to be there. It was very hard on them.

[00:06:58.12] INTERVIEWER: Yes.

[00:06:58.29] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: And we felt very bad that we made them suffer like that, but

that's what we wanted. And I didn't make my sisters do it. They did it on their own.

[00:07:12.09] INTERVIEWER: So did you--

[00:07:13.07] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: My older sister entered last. My youngest sister entered second.

[00:07:20.11] INTERVIEWER: Were you in novitiate together, or?

[00:07:23.22] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: No. No, no. I was never with my sisters in the novitiate. I was already professed. And then my little sister came next, and then my older sister.

[00:07:39.16] INTERVIEWER: And it sounds like you were all happy as Sisters?

[00:07:43.13] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. And we were very close together. We loved each other. We had lots of fun together. We enjoyed each--ourselves. It was a great time. Yeah.

[00:07:59.12] INTERVIEWER: So you--

[00:08:00.24] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: And we loved to travel to. My parents gave us a wonderful opportunity to visit a lot of countries that we would not ever have seen afterward because we were in the Sisterhood. But they took us to Europe and took us to Italy, to France, to Germany, to every place that they could think of. They wanted us to know all about the war.

[00:08:35.00] INTERVIEWER: And do you have a favorite country that you remember?

[00:08:39.21] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Switzerland. Because it was so clean and neat and nice and we loved it. So we always used to go to Switzerland in the summer time and we had a wonderful time there--and in the winter time too because we went skiing and, you know--

[00:09:02.15] INTERVIEWER: --enjoyed the Alps.

[00:09:03.25] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. It was such a nice time in the snow. They always had nice parties for us. We had a wonderful time.

[00:09:20.17] INTERVIEWER: When did you study--you studied to become a nurse.

[00:09:23.20] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, when I met the Sisters of St. Joseph I had gone to a religious school in Italy. And the nun there was so stuck up and they didn't seem to appeal to us. But when we went to the Sisters of St. Joseph we loved it because it was so simple and ordinary people and they were very pleasant and happy people. We loved it. It was so lovely.

[00:10:03.28] INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the names of those Sisters from high school?

[00:10:08.05] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Sister Marietta [Jennings] was one of them. And Sister Rosaleen [Rev. Mother Mary Rosaleen Lynch, 1900-1999]. Why I remember all of them. I could go on and on!

[00:10:19.08] INTERVIEWER: Please tell us! Because we--we don't know them so anybody you want us to remember.

[00:10:24.15] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well Sister Constance [Fitzgerald]. I knew Sister Constance then when she was just a young Sister. And I knew a lot of Sisters who were working there. They were really very pleasant people. They always had something nice to tell you and always very pleasant. We enjoyed them very much. And then when my sisters decided to become nuns, they didn't change anything and they just followed me.

[00:11:11.17] INTERVIEWER: So when you came to Los Angeles did you start to study at the Mount?

[00:11:15.08] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: When I came to Los Angeles I went--yes I went to the Mount. I graduated from the Mount. But not then. I graduated when I was a nun because I was just a freshman and sophomore there. And then later on when--after I became a nun I was older and so I graduated then.

[00:11:44.23] INTERVIEWER: Did you want to be a nurse? Did you know you wanted to be a nurse?

[00:11:49.22] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, my young--oldest sister had an appendectomy and I went to the hospital and I liked what the nurses were doing. And I told my father, "I want to be a nurse." And he said, "No, no. You don't want to be a nurse. They only empty bed pans." And I said, "No, no, no, they do much more than that." And so that's how I decided I want to be a nurse. I didn't really decide--they sent me to be a nurse. When I was in convent they decided that maybe I should be a nurse, that that would be okay.

[00:12:39.26] INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of your professors--your faculty from the Mount?

[00:12:43.27] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Huh?

[00:12:45.03] INTERVIEWER: Any of the Sisters who taught you at the Mount?

[00:12:47.11] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes.

[00:12:48.25] INTERVIEWER: Who were some of their names?

[00:12:50.15] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Sister Marietta [Jennings], Sister St. Claire [Coyne -1980, History faculty], Sister Constance [Fitzgerald]. Sister--oh lots of Sisters were there I knew. I remember them all.

[00:13:06.21] INTERVIEWER: Did you have a favorite nursing teacher?

[00:13:10.02] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, I didn't--at that time I didn't know that I wanted to be a nurse. I was just going to college. But I didn't become a nurse until I was professed.

[00:13:24.18] INTERVIEWER: Ah, okay.

[00:13:27.05] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: They sent me to become a nurse in Tucson--School of Nursing in Tucson. And I learned a lot because it was a very simple kind of education of nurses. Did all the--work. We did all the work. We didn't just write papers and copy papers and use computers. We didn't use that, no. We were always next to the patient that was sick. And I love that. And so I was able to do good IV's [intravenous injections] because I practiced so much that I became good at IV's. And so I got to do IV's in--every area of the hospital there.

[00:14:34.03] INTERVIEWER: I heard you had a reputation for IV's.

[00:14:39.23] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah, I know.

[00:14:41.00] INTERVIEWER: [laughs]. One of your students told me that.

[00:14:45.02] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I know. I used to--they used to call me for all the IV's in every place--in the whatever--probably it was--were having, you know, every time they had to have an IV they couldn't get in they could call me. And so I always went. It was very easy for me somehow.

[00:15:24.16] INTERVIEWER: Sounds like a very important gift in nursing.

[00:15:28.16] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. It is a very important [unintelligible] because there's nothing very much you can do without it if you want to take care of people, you know.

[00:15:43.20] INTERVIEWER: So you were back in Tucson for some time at St. Mary's Hospital?

[00:15:48.07] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Huh? Yes. I was there at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson for a while.

[00:15:57.25] INTERVIEWER: And then you came back--

[00:16:01.20] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: And then I came back and then I actually became a nurse then--I graduated from nursing and then I was able to practice my nursing. [smiles]. And just lately I got--I just got my new--I took my --how you call it--because I had to renew my license. And I got my new license this year--1917. But I'm not going to do it in 1918 because I'll be a hundred and nobody will want to use me.

[00:16:53.28] INTERVIEWER: [laughs]. So in 2017 you are still a licensed nurse?

[00:16:58.21] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. I just got my license a few months ago.

[00:17:04.18] INTERVIEWER: Congratulations.

[00:17:06.26] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. Thank you. It was a little struggle but I made it.

[00:17:12.10] INTERVIEWER: You took an exam or?

[00:17:15.01] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes, they give you a test.

[00:17:19.09] INTERVIEWER: Marvelous.

[00:17:20.27] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: But I had it--I can prove it to you.

[00:17:24.07] INTERVIEWER: I believe you. [All laugh]. So you worked at Daniel Freeman for most of your nursing career?

[00:17:35.05] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. That's where I went to mostly. I--but I also went to, you know, whatever school the Mount--I took courses at the Mount for my nursing first and then I finished up with taking my test there and then they gave me my license.

[00:18:11.06] INTERVIEWER: Everyone tells me that Daniel Freeman was a wonderful place to work.

[00:18:16.23] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: It was. It was. It was a very nice period. The nurses loved it. They really felt that was their hospital and they did everything possible to make it be nice and wonderful hospital. It was a wonderful, wonderful place.

[00:18:39.03] INTERVIEWER: Do you think that has to do with the Sisters of St. Joseph's spirit?

[00:18:44.25] INTERVIEWER: Yes. Yes I do. They really made it so normal, so nice, so pleasant, always happy. Pleasant, yes.

[00:18:57.15] INTERVIEWER: Were you there when it opened?

[00:19:00.15] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: When--

[00:19:02.06] INTERVIEWER: When Daniel Freeman opened as a hospital?

[00:19:04.25] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Ye--well, not really. No. But it was already open when I went there.

[00:19:13.06] INTERVIEWER: And you did--you were the Director of Nursing?

[00:19:18.28] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: At the end. I was just a regular nurse for a long time. Because I didn't want to do anything special. But then at the end they made me become the Director of Nurses and I

was that for a couple of years or so.

[00:19:38.14] INTERVIEWER: So you go to--did you mentor new nurses?

[00:19:42.08] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. I--that's why I know so many of the nurses because they were there so many years with me, and I know them all. There were a lot of Filipino nurses and they were so good. They were so pleasant--always willing to help--always willing to do something. It was a wonderful experience that people would do so much to help other people. I loved it.

[00:20:16.23] INTERVIEWER: Did you--since you were a nurse for so long, did you witness a change in technology or treatment that was remarkable to you?

[00:20:25.17] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. Well we began using computer--we began using more equipment, and I didn't like it as much, because you didn't have hands on with people and I--that's what I wanted. I wanted to be with the people and take care of them. I like to make them feel comfortable and happy and I was lucky enough that I could do it.

[00:20:59.19] INTERVIEWER: What about just medical advances. Was there something that you remember that you think is significant for our times?

[00:21:10.22] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: For our time? Well the lab progressed a lot. They didn't have lab work too much at that time. But now they do and a lot of reports on the lab and that. It's very helpful. And that is what's good that it happened but not everything was good. But I loved to be--take care of people--find them very uncomfortable and make them feel good and make them happy and make them comfortable. That was my joy. Fortunately I could do it, because I was free to do whatever I wanted to. They didn't--nothing stopped me. [smiles].

[00:22:11.29] INTERVIEWER: What would you give advice to a nursing student today? What would you want her to know about your experience?

[00:22:20.14] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well I would like them to know that the most important thing is how you make the people feel about themselves--how they--make them feel good about themselves. That they are able to cope with--help them, yes, but not do everything for them. Because otherwise they're not going to try. And that was always told us: don't help them all the way just help them a little bit because the best thing is to let them do what they can do themselves. So I'm practicing that too and sometimes my--the nurses don't let me do it all by myself. They want to help me, because they don't have that--probably that knowledge that it's better not to help them all the way--because you don't make an effort to do it.

[00:23:26.00] INTERVIEWER: So you keep making an effort.

[00:23:29.09] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I make an effort. Even now. It's very hard for me to walk, because my legs are not very good. My knees buckle. In fact I wrap my knees up so that they won't buckle down. And so that I can walk more. And it's true that when I walk more I feel better. Yeah. Thank you so much.

[00:24:01.28] INTERVIEWER: Are you--could I ask you one more question?

[00:24:05.08] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes?

[00:24:06.18] INTERVIEWER: I think when I first met you you still had your habit on.

[00:24:11.02] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes?

[00:24:12.10] INTERVIEWER: Do you mind if I ask you about that?

[00:24:13.27] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Sure.

[00:24:14.28] INTERVIEWER: What made you decide to stop wearing your habit?

[00:24:17.28] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, you know my hands are no good any more. I don't feel with my hands. And I couldn't feel--you know the habit is pinned with pins. And I couldn't feel--I had to ask people to do my--to pin me because I couldn't do it because I didn't know I had a needle in my hands--or the pin in my hands. Like I cannot sew now any more. And I used to love to mend and sew and do things, but not now any more, because my hands are so numb. I don't feel much. They're very cold--they're always cold.

[00:25:06.24] INTERVIEWER: So it was a practical reason to take off the habit?

[00:25:12.18] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, because I had to pin myself. And I had to ask the people to pin me. And I didn't want to do that the rest of my life. And so I decided to change--to put something on that didn't require pinning. And that's what I did.

[00:25:34.14] INTERVIEWER: Was it a big adjustment for you?

[00:25:36.29] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: At first, yes. But I'm not--not now anymore. I just--it's easier--much easier. But only I used to be able to put the same thing over and over again, but now I have to make a decision. And it's hard to make decisions, because I never can find what I want to put on. It's goofy. I guess.

[00:26:11.28] INTERVIEWER: I could see how having the habit--just--then you don't have to decide.

[00:26:15.18] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: No. You can put the same thing over and over again. You can make it black sometimes or white, but mainly I had--mine was always white, except when I went on evening soirées or something.

[00:26:34.25] INTERVIEWER: Do you enjoy living at Carondelet Center?

[00:26:36.29] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. It is very nice. I like to be with the Sisters. I wouldn't want to be any place else. It's lovely here. And the people are so nice to me. So I enjoy every bit of it. They are very nice to me. Like you. [laughs].

[00:27:00.19] INTERVIEWER: You're easy to be nice to. [laughs].

[00:27:03.24] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I don't know about that. [laughs].

[00:27:05.28] INTERVIEWER: You know we talk a lot about the charism these days.

[00:27:09.16] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah.

[00:27:10.03] INTERVIEWER: What do you think is important about your charism?

[00:27:14.07] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Is how much you love God and how much you love our blessed Mother. And I always--when I wake up in the morning the first thing I do, I say three Hail Mary's. And then I know the day's going to be okay. [laughs]. And it's true, you know. Hail Mary takes you a long ways. Blessed Mother is so good to me. She takes care of me when I'm having problems. And I have lots of problems sometimes. [laughs]. Goofy problems. Not very important.

[00:27:59.25] INTERVIEWER: What would you like our students at the Mount to know about the charism or the Sisters?

[00:28:07.12] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: That the charism--they have to know--understand what charism first is. And charism is the love of God--our love for God in our own way. We--the Sisters of St. Joseph have a very special charism, and so we follow the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. And that's why we love to have him. And we are so happy that the college became a university, because it was a struggle to get it

there. And now it is there and we are so happy. And the Sisters--the students are so happy that it's a university because they have a good reputation--that they have graduated from a university. Yeah.

[00:29:09.08] INTERVIEWER: So it sounds like you are proud of Mount Saint Mary's.

[00:29:13.17] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes, I am. I went there too you know.

[00:29:17.18] INTERVIEWER: Do you have any--

[00:29:19.24] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: --but I didn't graduate when I was a girl. I graduated when I was a Sister.

[00:29:24.26] INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else you remember about the Mount that we should know?

[00:29:29.21] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yes. That nurses were always so nice. Students were always pleasant. They always--they were very--besides being very smart, they were very good and did a good job of helping the Mount, helping the--all they could. Students really helped the Mount a lot. Without them we could have not done that well. Because they were very involved in the Mount itself, because they loved it as much as we did. Yeah. They were very wonderful students.

[00:30:25.29] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I think it says a lot about the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

[00:30:29.04] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. And Sister Constance [Fitzgerald] is an example of that. She was--she was just a young Sister when I was at the Academy in Tucson as a boarder. And she was such a darling then. And look at her now--a hundred and three. Running around visiting people, talking to everybody. She's a very wonderful woman.

[00:31:02.26] INTERVIEWER: I agree. She told us some of her secrets for a long life.

[00:31:07.10] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Did she? Oh good.

[00:31:10.09] INTERVIEWER: She said it was nutrition.

[00:31:11.13] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Nutrition. Yeah, it's true. Yes, she's right. If you don't eat you don't go.

[00:31:18.10] INTERVIEWER: Do you have any other suggestions for a long life?

[00:31:22.07] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well, yes. Do everything you think you can do--do it. Because then it makes you realize that you can do a lot more than what you were doing. Because really we are so lucky to be able to do what we want to do now. At least I'm lucky. Because I don't have to restrain myself. I can do whatever I want now in my old age. [laughs].

[00:31:57.17] INTERVIEWER: Some people have described you as "fearless".

[00:31:59.04] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: What?

[00:32:01.02] INTERVIEWER: Some people describe you as "fearless".

[00:32:03.08] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Oh really? [laughs].

[00:32:04.27] INTERVIEWER: What do you think about that?

[00:32:06.08] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I don't think so. I don't think so. But anyway, it's a good thought. [laughs].

[00:32:13.28] INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you want to share with us about your life, about your family,

being a Sister?

[00:32:21.18] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: No. I had a wonderful family. Even when they [unintelligible] kind of difficult. My mother was such a good woman. She loved the poor. She was always thinking about helping people. And my father also. He--see, even though he didn't show it, he always was helping people. Many times he--I remember I stayed with him in the same room once in a very hot place in Italy. And I saw him at the window and I was wondering what he was doing. What he was doing was wrapping up some money with paper so he could drop it to a man who was looking for food in the trash. And so he dropped the money right at his feet so he could find it. And he stayed there at the window until he came by there. So he did several things like that for the poor. And you'd think he didn't care, but he did care a lot, even though he was very strict with his daughters. Yeah. He didn't want us to become nuns. He wanted grandchildren. And we didn't give it to them because we all three of us became nuns. So now we don't have any nephews or nieces. So--and all the rest of the families did now because they are older than us. Yeah. My oldest sister died at ninety-two, and my youngest sister died quite young. She died of cancer--Hildegard.

[00:34:26.20] INTERVIEWER: What ministries were your sisters in?

[00:34:29.13] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: My oldest sister was a PhD of Romance Languages. And my youngest sister in Spanish--she taught Spanish mainly.

[00:34:43.27] INTERVIEWER: And they were--they taught at the Mount, is that right?

[00:34:47.14] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah. They taught at the Mount, yeah. Hildegarde--Aline Marie taught at the Mount as a Sister as a girl--Miss Gerber--she was Miss Gerber there for a long time before she became a nun. But Hildegarde--she always taught Spanish. But she was in charge of the boarders at the Mount. She was a wonderful little person. She--and she was very funny--very witty. She made people laugh. She was so cute.

[00:35:31.14] INTERVIEWER: You must miss them.

[00:35:33.22] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: You [unintelligible] see a picture--it's--she's with my father--and she starts saying, "Look at my father. Here I am." [laughs]. And here I am doing this and making eyes at the people about my father. She was so cute. If you look at that picture you can see it. She said, "Just look at my father. I'm better than he is." [laughs]. She was so funny.

[00:36:11.25] INTERVIEWER: Which sister was at the Doheny Mansion?

[00:36:17.09] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Aline Marie.

[00:36:18.14] INTERVIEWER: Aline Marie.

[00:36:19.18] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: She loved the Mansion. And she wanted to protect it to last forever [unintelligible], but they were selling it--trying to make money so they were selling some of the beautiful things. And she was so upset. Yeah.

[00:36:38.18] INTERVIEWER: I think that's all stopped now.

[00:36:39.23] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Yeah.

[00:36:41.01] INTERVIEWER: Now the mansion looks very beautiful.

[00:36:43.11] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: It looks nice now, yeah. That's good. I'm glad that the Mansion looks nice, because she would be so happy to know that it's taken care--because she really worked hard to keep it nice--the best she could.

[00:37:05.03] INTERVIEWER: Yes.

[00:37:05.28] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: Well thank you very much for listening to me.

[00:37:09.15] INTERVIEWER: Thank you for sharing. You were perfect!

[00:37:11.27] SISTER MECHTILDE GERBER: I don't know how perfect I am I don't know what I'm saying!

[00:37:16.24] INTERVIEWER: It was wonderful.

[00:37:18.24] [Director's comments].

[00:39:38.06] End of interview.

Interview Index

Interview Date: 08/01/2017

Interviewee: Sister Mechtilde Gerber

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 08/16/2017

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:00:33.03] Name in religion: Sister Mechtilde Therese Victoria Emmanuelle Gerber[?]. Baptismal name: Aline Therese Victoria Gerber. Born November 11, 1918. Age 98. Born: Mexico City, Mexico.

[00:02:10.23] Early life and family. Father born in New York, but Swiss descent. Mechtilde educated in Switzerland and Tucson, Arizona. Attended St. Joseph Academy.

Other sisters: Religious name Sister Aline Marie, baptismal name Ilda [Florence] Gerber; Religious name Sister Mary Hildegarde; baptismal name Anna Maria Gerber.

[00:04:07.25] Early vocation. High school at St. Joseph Academy.

[00:04:46.28] Family reaction to vocation.

[00:05:20.08] Novitiate at St. Mary's Academy in Los Angeles, California on Slauson. Parents trying to stop vocation. Sisters' entry to community. Traveling with parents.

[00:09:17.25] Education as nurse. Names of early Sisters from high school: Sister Marietta [Jennings]. Sister Rosaleen [Rev. Mother Mary Rosaleen Lynch, 1900-1999]. Sister Constance [Fitzgerald].

[00:11:11.17] Attending the Mount. Early nursing vocation.

[00:12:39.16] Mount faculty. Sister Marietta [Jennings]. Sister St. Claire [Coyne -1980, History faculty]. Sister Constance [Fitzgerald]. Attending Tucson School of Nursing. Giving IVs.

[00:15:42.21] Attending St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson. Becoming a nurse. Renewing nursing license in 2017.

[00:17:30.16] Working at Daniel Freeman Hospital. Influence of CSJs at Daniel Freeman. Eventually Director of Nursing at Daniel Freeman. Mentoring new nurses. Filipino nurses.

[00:20:15.13] Changes in nursing technology. Using computers. Medical advances: laboratory support such as blood work.

[00:22:10.27] Advice to nursing students. Make people feel good about themselves. Help them to do for themselves.

[00:24:06.21] Changing the habit.

[00:26:32.11] Living at Carondelet Center.

[00:27:06.13] Charism. Advice to students about charism and Sisters. Mount change to University.

[00:29:26.09] Other Mount memories. Helpfulness of students. Sister Constance [Fitzgerald].

[00:31:18.23] Suggestions for long life. Do everything that you can do.

[00:32:14.03] Other reflections. Family. Parents. Sisters.

[00:34:25.16] Sisters' ministries. Sister Aline Marie: PhD in Romance Languages. Faculty at Mount as "Miss Ilda Gerber" before becoming a nun. Sister Mary Hildegarde taught Spanish, in charge of Mount boarders. Sister Aline Marie at Doheny Mansion.

[00:37:15.20] [Director's comments].

[00:39:38.12] End of interview.